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Teachers' Self-efficacy When Managing Disruptive Student Behaviors and its Influence on Teacher Burnout

Gail Lanza, EdD

University of Connecticut, 2020

This qualitative collective case study sought to explain rural public elementary school teachers' feelings of self-efficacy and burnout when managing student behaviors, their perceptions of student behaviors, why these perceptions exist, and strategies used, if any, that may result in increased feelings of self-efficacy and/or decreased feelings of burnout. Results indicate that teachers overwhelmingly felt the trauma affecting some students outside of school significantly limited their ability to improve student outcomes within the school setting. They felt these impacting factors are a growing problem for which they are ill-equipped to resolve. Their responses also indicated a belief that certain students are incapable of maintaining appropriate behavior in the classroom as a result of their life circumstances, no matter the behavioral strategies used.

On this note, and regardless of their number of years in the profession, grade level taught, or school where they teach, the teacher respondents described many of the behavioral strategies they use as ineffective, fail to extinguish student misbehavior, and may even unintentionally escalate it over time. The results of this study indicate, however, that although student behaviors may contribute to teacher burnout in rural settings, they are but one of a combination of factors contributing to teachers' feelings of burnout. Such factors include, but are not limited to, a reduction in supports and resources, an overall increase in student need and trauma, and increased expectations and accountability. Additionally, these rural teachers may be

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unintentionally relying on a deficit perspective as an explanation for their lack of success with some of their students.

Teachers' Self-efficacy When Managing Disruptive Student Behaviors and its Influence on
Teacher Burnout

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A Capstone

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at the

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APPROVAL PAGE

Doctor of Education Capstone

Teachers' Self-efficacy when Managing Disruptive Student Behaviors and its Influence
on Teacher Burnout

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Teaching is a demanding profession. Turnover in the profession is higher now than it has ever been, with as many as 40-50% of teachers leaving by the end of their fifth year (Strauss, 2015). In fact, teacher attrition is such a problem that the Learning Policy Institute asserts the teaching force is "a leaky bucket, losing hundreds of thousands of teachers each year" (Westervelt, 2016). For example, every year, U.S. schools hire more than 200,000 new teachers for the first day of class, but by the time summer rolls around, at least 22,000 have quit. Even those who make it beyond the first year are not likely to stay long. Research from as early as 1999 suggests many teachers feel unable to continue working due to feeling drained and exhausted (Brouwers & Tomic, 1999).

A 2012 MetLife Survey of Teachers found 51% of teachers report feeling under extreme stress several days a week, and teacher job satisfaction declined from 62% of teachers feeling "very satisfied" in 2008 to 39% in 2012 (Ward, 2015). Research has demonstrated that students' disruptive behaviors contribute, at least in part, to a decline in teachers' job satisfaction as teachers who are confronted with such behaviors are more emotionally exhausted, and their attitudes towards their students are more negative than those of teachers who do not face such behaviors (Byrne, 1994). A 2018 study conducted by Keith Herman and Wendy Reinke at the University of Missouri determined that nine in ten elementary school teachers experience high levels of stress and burnout, which actually increases students' misbehavior.

This issue is prevalent in Connecticut, the site of this study. For example, a March 14, 2018 article in the Connecticut Education Association newsletter reported an increase in teacher assaults by students which range from being kicked, bitten, knocked down and having chairs and books thrown at them. Connecticut teachers also recently asked legislators to pass Senate Bill 453, An Act Concerning Classroom Safety and Disruptive Behavior, to address students'

behavior in the classroom. Written testimony of teachers to legislators included statements such as, “I work in an early elementary school, and the staff and teachers are attacked both verbally and physically on a daily basis.”

In addition to adding difficulty to their jobs, negative student behaviors can also claim a psychological toll on teachers. Indeed, a major contributor to teacher burnout is the increasingly difficult student behaviors they face (Swartz, 2018). This result of burnout (exhaustion of physical or emotional strength or motivation usually as a result of prolonged stress or frustration - Merriam-Webster), makes sense as it often occurs when self-efficacy beliefs, or the belief in one's capabilities to produce effects (Bandura, 1994) are low and can directly affect teachers' actions, regulation of effort or emotions when dealing with disruptive students (Tsouloupas, 2011). Exploring teachers' perceptions of student behavior and how these perceptions may influence their responses to those behaviors and thereby influence self-efficacy when managing student behavior is important when researching the prevalence of, and contributions to, teachers' feelings of burnout. Equally important is the investigation of teacher responses to student behavior to identify strategies that can enhance feelings of self-efficacy, which positively influence feelings of burnout and teachers' appraisals of student behavior.

According to Friedman (2006), the most prevalent driver of teacher burnout stems from their everyday dealings with student behavior, and the most prominent source attributable to teachers' stress at work is their perception of student misbehavior (Kuzsman & Schnall, 1987). Teachers who experience high levels of stress and burnout presumably have less tolerance for what they perceive as student maladaptive behaviors, and they may therefore have lower tolerance for student behavior and higher levels of burnout (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Kokkinos, 2007). Teachers, especially those who teach in schools serving higher proportions of

students from low socio-economic backgrounds, may perceive certain students' behaviors as particularly egregious because they see these students as lacking in some way (Gerstein, 2016). This may contribute to teachers becoming discouraged regarding their ability to manage their students, potentially causing them to feel burnt out.

Research has demonstrated that a teacher's ability to manage student behavior is linked to teacher burnout (Carson et. al., 2011) and teacher attrition (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Liu & Meyer, 2005; Tsouloupas et. al., 2010). A teacher's perception of his/her ability to manage student behavior, therefore, may cause him/her to develop negative attitudes and an increased number of problems at work, including deteriorating relationships with students and colleagues (Maslach et. al., 2001). To understand why managing student misbehavior may trigger teacher burnout, it is worthwhile to investigate teachers' perceptions of student behaviors and why, teachers' actual responses to student behaviors (strategies) and why, and their self-ratings of efficacy with managing student behavior.

Literature Review

This research study aims to examine the difficulties teachers in rural, low socio-economic schools experience with classroom management and student behavior. Teaching is considered a highly stressful occupation with burnout occurring as a result of chronic work stress (Kokkinos, 2007). The literature indicates that the leading source of teacher burnout is student misbehavior, a reality of teaching for which teachers feel ill-prepared (McCann & Johannessen, 2004; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003).

Teachers' perceptions of student behavior

Research shows student misbehavior has a positive effect on teacher burnout, so when investigating teacher burnout, it is reasonable to look at teacher-student relationships (Burke et.

al., 1996; Friedman, 1995; Lamude et. al., 1992), and more specifically, teachers' perceptions of their students' behaviors. Teachers who experience a relatively high level of stress and burnout presumably have less tolerance for what they perceive as classroom disruption (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000). Thus, instead of using proactive strategies (e.g., outlining rules, routines, policies) to monitor or prevent misbehavior along with some reactive strategies (e.g., utilizing disciplinary systems) to respond to challenging behaviors as they occur (Chang, 2009), teachers experiencing symptoms of burnout may refer students to special education, seek outside help, or remove students from class. It may therefore be that teachers experiencing symptoms of burnout have low tolerance for perceived student misbehavior and that burnout negatively affects teachers' perceptions of the occurrence and seriousness of student misbehavior (Kokkinos, 2007).

In other words, teachers' perceptions of students' behavior may influence their management and discipline strategies and, consequently, their feelings of self-efficacy and burnout. Certain student behaviors, such as daydreaming, rudeness, talking or otherwise disrupting lessons, although not necessarily be rule breaking, may then be viewed as inappropriate and problematic (Sun & Shek, 2012). Exploring individual teachers' perceptions of student problem behaviors and why they have these perceptions, along with their feelings of self-efficacy and burnout in managing them, will expand the current literature by helping to determine what teachers experience in their day to day practice when dealing with student behavior and classroom management issues and, more importantly, what strategies, if any, teachers employ as a function of their perceptions and/or to increase feelings of self-efficacy and reduce feelings of burnout.

Deficit Orientation. Unfortunately, a deficit model of education exists within our schools where, too often, some students (e.g., students from lower economic communities) are

viewed by teachers and leaders as lacking in some way. Teachers and leaders view these students as defective or deficient, needing to be fixed. They are perceived as not as good as, and/or needing to develop skills valued by mainstream society (Gerstein, 2016). A deficit orientation is so pervasive in our schools that many educators are unaware that it exists (Gerstein, 2016).

When teachers focus on students' inabilities rather than on their abilities, it may cause them to feel frustrated and ineffective over time and may cause them to feel that some students simply cannot be successful. Descriptions that teachers make of student's capabilities, like "C student" or "at risk" can frame students in a way that assumes they are less capable, which can then play out in practice (Horn, 2017).

A deficit orientation may help to explain why teachers, especially those who work in low socio-economic rural districts, experience feelings of burnout. A perception exists that those living in poverty do not work hard enough (Gerstl-Pepin, 2005). Instead of trying to understand what causes students to be disruptive, assumptions are made about what students need based on their economic background and community, and instruction becomes more about controlling students rather than teaching them (Gerstl-Pepin, 2005). According to Tieken (2014), rural school districts have problems that other districts do not. Tieken (2014) asserts that myths surrounding rural communities have led to inaccuracies resulting in the marginalization of entire communities of people, including students. An understanding of their unique issues, particularly within the context of federal, state and local decision making is necessary.

Teacher Burnout

Teacher burnout may be more prevalent among teachers who lack efficacy when dealing with student misbehavior (Slider et. al., 2006). Burnout is a phenomenon that can be described as a psychological process by which teachers' efforts, energy, persistence, and coping mechanisms

are overpowered by recurring and unfavorable work-related stressors (Schaufeli & Buunk, 2003; Schwarzer et. al., 2000). Student misconduct has repeatedly been identified as a primary source of teacher stress and feelings of burnout (Betoret, 2006; Evers et al., 2004; Hastings & Bham, 2003; Kokkinos, 2007; Tsouloupas et al., 2010).

Burnout can include emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced accomplishment (Leiter et. al., 1998). It involves feelings of disengagement, unpleasantness, and meaninglessness applied to issues that once felt important, meaningful, and challenging (Maslach et al., 2001). Teachers suffering from burnout may experience an increased number of problems, including decreased mental and physical well-being and deteriorating relationships with students and colleagues (Jennings et. al., 2013). Burnout may include feelings of exhaustion, cynicism and ineffectiveness (Chang, 2013). Tsouloupas et. al. (2010) found that teachers who report higher frequencies of experiencing student discipline issues and higher intensities of emotions dealing with student misbehavior are more likely to report higher levels of emotional exhaustion, a symptom of burnout. Burnout stems from feelings of inefficacy, incompetence, depletion of emotional resources, and hopelessness (Chan, 2006; Friedman, 2006), and is strongly related to adverse outcomes such as decreased job satisfaction, performance and increased stress (Friedman, 2000).

According to Leiter et. al. (1998), depersonalization is another sign of burnout characterized by cynicism, irritability, loss of idealism, and negative attitudes. It refers to negative, callous, or excessively detached responses to other people (Leiter et. al., 1998). Cynicism usually develops in response to an overload of exhaustion, and is self-protective. It serves as a buffer of “detached concern.” (Leiter & Maslach 2003, p. 93). This detachment, or distancing, is an immediate reaction to exhaustion, such that a strong relationship from

exhaustion to cynicism is found consistently in burnout research across a wide range of organizational and occupational settings (Maslach et al., 2006). In some instances, burnout appears to be a function, to some degree, of either exhaustion or cynicism, or a combination of the two (Byrne, 1994; Lee & Ashforth, 1996). A work situation with chronic, overwhelming demands that contribute to exhaustion or cynicism may erode one's sense of effectiveness and productivity (Leiter & Maslach, 2003). Burnout also refers to feelings of incompetence and a lack of achievement and productivity in work (Leiter & Maslach, 2003). A lack of personal accomplishment refers to a decline in one's feelings of competence and of successful achievement at work (Maslach et al., 2001; Schaufeli et al., 2009).

Blasé's research (1982) determined that teachers identify dealing with student misbehavior as stressful and results in symptoms of burnout. Additionally, he determined that teachers trying to cope with stress gradually lose interest in their students, and experience feelings of emotional exhaustion and frustration. Research focusing on student misbehavior and teachers' perceptions of it over the last several decades has corroborated Blasé's findings. More specifically, minor and repetitive student behaviors such as disruption (e.g., being loud/making noise/talking out of turn, getting up without permission), disrespect of the teacher and others (e.g., talking back, threatening, hostile, harassing), and apathetic behavior (e.g., ignoring, avoiding) are shown to have the most significant effect on teacher burnout (Friedman, 2006; Hastings & Bham, 2003). The frequent occurrence of student misbehavior impedes learning, and can contribute to fatigue and burnout (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000).

Research suggests teacher burnout may have a cyclical relationship with issues of self-efficacy. In other words, high levels of student disruptive behavior may lead to lower levels of teachers' self-efficacy in classroom management, which may lead to burnout, which in turn may

lead to higher levels of student disruptive behavior further reducing the level of teachers' self-efficacy (Brouwers & Tomic, 1999). Feelings of burnout can, therefore, strengthen a loss cycle of daily demands, daily exhaustion, and daily self-undermining (Bakker & Costa, 2014).

Individuals experiencing burnout seem unable to satisfy their basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Autonomy implies a universal urge to be causal agents and to experience volition; competence concerns an inherent desire to be effective in dealing with the environment; and relatedness implies the universal propensity to interact with, be connected to, and experience caring for other people (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Research demonstrates that satisfaction of these needs fosters wellbeing and performance, whereas frustration of them may foster job strain and impaired performance (Gagne & Vansteenkiste, 2013). Because burned-out individuals seem unable to satisfy their daily basic needs for relatedness, autonomy and competence, it is likely their daily work engagement is low (Bakker & Costa, 2014), and it may be inferred that teachers facing burnout will also have low engagement with their students.

Self-efficacy

Bandura (1997) defines self-efficacy as the beliefs individuals hold regarding their ability to successfully carry out a task requiring specific knowledge and cognition. More simply stated, self-efficacy refers to the belief in one's ability to successfully produce a desired outcome (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy can be applied to specific populations (e.g., teachers) and specific situations (e.g., handling misbehavior problems) (Almog & Shechtman, 2007; Shechtman et al., 2005). It does not deal with knowledge and skills as such, but with the belief regarding one's knowledge and skills in a certain area (Brouwers & Tomic, 1999).

Self-efficacy beliefs influence individuals' decisions on how much time and effort they will spend on specific tasks, and for how long they will persist when dealing with adverse situations (Almog & Shechtman, 2007; Bandura, 1997). Bandura (1997) asserts that individuals with high self-efficacy beliefs are more likely to take on challenging tasks, show more perseverance and eventually succeed. This is in contrast to individuals with low self-efficacy beliefs, who are more likely to avoid tasks in which they feel they will not be successful and to become tense, stressed, and disinterested faster than their more efficacious counterparts (Bandura, 1997; Evers et al., 2002). Efficacious teachers may be more successful, enjoy better relations with their students, colleagues, and administration, and may be more likely to sustain positive attitudes through adverse situations than low efficacy teachers (Almog & Shechtman, 2007; Gordon & Debus, 2002). In this study, I will use feelings of self-efficacy to consider the influence student behavior may have on teacher burnout. Exploring teacher efficacy beliefs to effectively manage student behavior may help identify important factors that contribute to teacher burnout. For example, higher levels of burnout may occur when teachers continually observe student misbehaviors in their classrooms and doubt their ability to deal with them (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000).

Burnout is a stressful psychological phenomenon in teaching, which contrasts feelings of control and self-regulation found in self-efficacy (Friedman, 2006). Friedman (2006) further asserts that burnout results from the discrepancy between desired and observed levels of self-efficacy. Therefore, researchers suggest self-efficacy as a plausible approach for studying teachers' most prevalent source of burnout and emotional exhaustion: their everyday dealings with student classroom behavior (Chan, 2006; Evers et al., 2004; Friedman, 2006; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003; Tsouloupas et al., 2010). Self-efficacy may be used as a conceptual framework

for studying the influence of emotionally charged relationships on burnout because, according to Bandura (1997), this theory integrates in its framework the origins or sources of efficacy beliefs, their structure and function, the processes through which they produce effects, and the possibilities for change (Brouwer & Tomic, 2000).

Research Questions

- 1) What are teachers' perceptions of student behaviors?
- 2) How and why do teachers respond to student behaviors?
- 3) How and why do teachers' perceptions of behaviors and their responses to them influence their efficacy and feelings of burnout?

Methods and Data Collection

Study Design

I used a qualitative collective case study research design (Creswell, 2007), which sought to explain rural public elementary school teachers' feelings of self-efficacy and burnout when managing student behavior. This study also explored rural public elementary school teachers' perceptions of student behavior, why these perceptions exist, and strategies used, if any, that may result in increased feelings of self-efficacy and/or decreased feelings of burnout. I used multiple data sources (interviews, documents, and reports) to create case descriptions and case-based themes (Creswell 2007, p. 73). A collective case study design permitted me to compare and analyze multiple cases to illustrate the experiences of rural public elementary school teachers in their day to day practice when dealing with student behavior and classroom management issues and, more importantly, how rural public elementary school teachers respond to student behavior to help increase feelings of self-efficacy and/or reduce feelings of burnout (Creswell 2007, p. 74).

Sample

The research sample included six rural public elementary school teachers. Rural school teachers were chosen to highlight the effects that a rural school setting may have on educators' perceptions of students in general, and more specifically, their perceptions of student behavior as it relates to their own feelings of self-efficacy. To provide a comparison, if applicable, between beginning, middle and veteran teachers, four teacher participants had ten or more years of teaching experience at the elementary level and two teacher participants had four or less years of teaching experience at the elementary level. This comparison is particularly relevant given research suggesting the amount of time in the classroom may increase teachers' feelings of self-efficacy with management of student behavior. To provide another comparison, if applicable, between elementary schools in one rural school district in Connecticut, three teachers (grades K-3) were sampled from each of its two elementary schools. The research sample also included two building level administrators (principals): one from each elementary school, which provided contextual information for each school and the district as a whole. (see table 1). The teachers' participation was voluntary and written consent from the school/district administration and the participants was obtained prior to data collection. Issues of anonymity and confidentiality in handling the data were clearly explained prior to participation in the study.

Table 1.0

Research Participants

School A	Grade Level	Years of Experience
Principal 1	PK-3	11
Teacher 1	K	17
Teacher 2	2	4

Teacher 3	3	30
School B	Grade Level	Years of Experience
Principal 2	K-3	7
Teacher 4	1	13
Teacher 5	3	20
Teacher 6	3	1

Contextual information. The district in which this study took place is a rural PK-12 district with six schools located in Connecticut. According to the 2017-18 State Department of Education district school profile, its enrollment is approximately 2,250 students with a per pupil expenditure of approximately \$15,500. The average class size in each of the two elementary schools used for this research was approximately twenty to twenty-one students per class with the exception of four kindergarten classes at one of the schools that had an enrollment of twenty-four students per class. Approximately 48% of the district's students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals, which represents a 20% increase over the past five years. Approximately 15% of the district's students are identified as having disabilities, approximately 12% of its students are chronically absent, approximately 1.5% of its students are English learners and approximately 86% of its students are white. According to the State of Connecticut Department of Children and families, in the fiscal year 2018 593 reports of suspected child abuse or neglect were filed, 216 reports were accepted and 136 were substantiated. According to the 2018 CERC (CT Economic Resource Center) town profile, approximately 14% of the town's residents have attained a bachelor's degree or higher and approximately 42% of its residents are high school graduates. The unemployment rate is 6%.

As a result of midyear state government “holdbacks” in educational cost sharing funds, the district was forced to cut approximately \$615,000 from its budget mid-year in December, 2017. This resulted in an unexpected and significant reduction of staffing, support and student programs district wide. In addition, the district has had limited resources available for professional development opportunities. Polly Bath, a widely recognized behavior expert in New England schools, was the last invited speaker to the district several years ago. Every teacher and administrator who was interviewed mentioned this professional development opportunity.

According to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner in Connecticut, deaths resulting from drug overdose have more than quintupled in this town since 2012 (data.ct.gov). In addition, there is a high incidence level of sexual assaults, rape and incest against children in this particular area of Connecticut (Fox, 2001); so much so, that a local hospital set up a special room equipped to examine child victims. These statistics suggest many students in this district have experienced significant trauma, which may negatively impact their school experiences.

Sites. According to its principal, school A is a PK-3 school with a student population of approximately four-hundred forty students, approximately 90% of whom are Caucasian. The EL population at the school has increased over the past several years. According to the principal, the school has always had students with intense needs behavioral and academic needs. According to State data, the school has experienced a 4% increase in their special education population from the 2015-16 school year to the 2017-18 school year and is 5% above the State average with a total of 19.8% identified special education students. The principal identified anywhere from two to five students in each classroom that have “high intense needs socially and emotionally.” He reported that the school once housed a clinical day treatment program within the building, which was available for students district-wide. The school’s free and reduced lunch rate is

approximately 55%, which is a significant increase from five or six years ago when the school's free and reduced lunch rate was approximately 25%. Typical class sizes range from eighteen to twenty-one students, and this year there are twenty-four students in each of four kindergarten classes. There are four sections per grade level in the school, including pre-kindergarten.

The principal described PBIS (positive behavioral interventions and supports) at the school as a district-wide initiative that started many years ago, which included training on approaching student behavior positively and looking at the whole child. He went on to explain that the district has recently moved from a tuition-based pre-k program to a universal pre-k program, which has "put a strain" on the school resources due to support staffing shortages and increased behaviors in the school. The principal described his staff as dwindling. About two years ago, he had approximately ninety-nine staff members and he currently has about eighty-five. He has lost staff from custodians to paraeducators to reading and behavior specialists. He described paraeducator hours being cut and a decrease in State funding. His kindergarten classes share paraprofessional support. He is struggling to find substitutes: custodians, paraeducators and teachers. A shortage of staff has been combined with an increase in student need, which has put the school in a reactive mode with the principal himself covering duties and supervising on bus runs if necessary. He described a recent bus incident where the police were called to assist with transferring a kindergartener off a bus to ensure the safety of all the children riding the bus. He further described having to call mobile psych (emergency medical services) to the school on multiple occasions as a result of student behaviors at school. The principal noted that the school experiences student truancy and has involvement with the Department of Children and Families due to student and family issues. Despite these issues, however, the principal reported that, according to the Connecticut State Department of Education, their school is rated at the top

achievement level (tier one), and they have had this rating for several years.

According to its principal, school B is a K-3 school with a student population of approximately three-hundred seventy-five students, 93%-94% of whom are Caucasian. The EL population at the school is increasing, although it is still less than 1%. According to the principal, the special education population is growing, although it is just under the State average.

According to State data, the special education population has increased 3% from the 2015-16 school year to the 2017-18 school year. The free and reduced lunch rate is approximately 52%.

The school has four sections per grade level. According to the principal, the school has a high number of students who require social and emotional support. She reported that the school has different tiers of intervention for behavioral and academic support as well as social support. The principal described her school as a “PBIS” school and stated, “We use a lot of data to drive what we do for kids as far as supporting them in their behavioral needs.” She explained that PBIS was a district-wide initiative approximately six or seven years ago and that they do their own in-house training for new staff. She said that the training is “basically, the down and dirty of what is PBIS. I have a PBIS team and they actually made up a new teacher handbook, kind of giving people the ins and outs, then we give them the thick book that goes with it that has all the detail that they probably will never have time to read. But the handbook is a really good tool...” She stated that the PBIS team is responsible for school-wide climate and that she has a behavior management team that is focused on tier two and three supports, but that the behavior management specialist position at her school is being eliminated for budgetary reasons.

The principal described the school’s policies as having “a little bit more leeway for our tolerance of certain behaviors because it’s developmentally appropriate...and we’re trying to mold them a certain way that we want them to go.” She further explained that the school does

not formally have a restorative justice system, although she described that “much of what we do here has that quality to it in the sense that you were disruptive to your classroom community, how are you going to make that better for them, how do you get the trust back of your classmates or your teacher, and we do a lot of that kind of problem solving with kids.” The principal explained that the school-wide behavior data at her school indicated an uptrend in more physical behaviors and an increase in extreme behaviors seen in younger students. Further, the principal stated that “there is an uptick in attendance issues with staff this year.” She also expressed that “stress can bring on sickness...and sometimes you just need that (a mental health day), and I don’t ever deny anybody that, because I think I’d much rather have you take a day off than blow it here at work...Take the time you need for yourself. Yes, we don’t have a sub, but don’t stress out about that.”

Professional development and initiatives. According to principal 2, the district adopted a PBIS initiative approximately six or seven years ago. The initiative was district funded at its inception, but much of the funding has since become scarce due to budgetary cuts. More recently, the district has supported professional development in the area of trauma informed care and practices as well as “mindfulness.” The district was forced to give up a professional day in the 2018-19 school year due to budget cuts made mid-year as a result of a State shortfall in education funding. Also, within the last few years, the district invited Polly Bath, a widely recognized behavior expert in New England schools, to provide professional development to all staff regarding strategies to respond to student behaviors. The same principal explained that, due to rising concerns in the district regarding staff stress levels, a district psychologist provided a professional development opportunity for staff on “taking care of the caregiver.” The principal

said that, as a result of this opportunity, “a lot of staff came back with some good points that I’ve seen them try to implement.”

Resource constraints. Both principals discussed resource constraints in terms of decreased local funding and district-wide supports over the past several years. The school district has also recently experienced a significant “hold-back” of funding from the State. In a recent Hartford Courant article (April 8, 2019), journalist Denise Coffey reported that a new “Forgotten Corner Task Force Bill” has moved to the senate floor in hopes that it will bring attention to “stark inequities” in funding for mental and behavioral health services throughout the state. Ms. Coffey reported:

Often referred to as the Quiet Corner for its rural character and low population density, northeastern Connecticut suffers from lack of mental and behavioral health services. State funding discrepancies are so acute that social service providers have come up with another moniker for the region: the Forgotten Corner. They claim the region has been continually and drastically underfunded for years.

John Goodman, communications director for United Services, testified before the Connecticut (CT) Planning and Development Committee that:

Studies show that residing in northeastern Connecticut can be hazardous to your health...if this happened in any other state, it would be deemed a county-wide health emergency and immediate state action would be taken. In the case of the Forgotten Corner, we’re just forgotten.”

Michael Turano, a longtime member of the United Services board of directors, stated that he joined the board of directors after discovering “the lack of services available to students in his school district” where he served on the CT Board of Education.

Data collection and Procedures

To gain an understanding of rural public elementary school teachers' experiences when managing student behavior, I utilized interviews, documents, and reports (teacher and principal interviews, PBIS documents and guidelines, office referral forms and guidelines, school-wide behavioral reports, and district level performance reports). I conducted one 40 minute and one 60 minute face-to-face semi-structured interview (Appendices A and B) with each participant teacher (six) using open-ended questions. These were intended to elicit views and opinions from participants (Creswell 2009, p. 246). I also conducted one, 60 minute face-to-face semi-structured interview (Appendix C) with each participant building level administrator (two).

I interviewed each teacher twice. The first interview allowed me to build rapport with the participants and gain information about them, such as their backgrounds, approaches to student behavior, school and classroom behavior systems, and the context of the school/district (Seidman, 2006). The second interview probed deeper into teachers' responses to, and challenges with, student behavior. It focused on: the participants' challenges with student behavior; their perceptions of student behavior; any strategies that are used to promote self-efficacy, and/or prevent or minimize feelings of burnout. Because participants may find it difficult to respond to direct questions regarding their feelings of burnout, approaches used to collect information on this topic included six behavior scenarios (Appendix D) that teachers were asked to respond to using a template of emojis (Appendix E). The use of emojis assisted the teachers with identifying their possible feelings of burnout by allowing them to point to expressions of emotions in the emoji images and then describe their emotions, thereby making a thoughtful and less threatening connection to their feelings.

I interviewed each building administrator one time for approximately 60 minutes. The interview provided me with information about the participants' backgrounds as well as the context of the school/district. Individual interviews took place at a time and location most convenient to each participant. I read each interview transcript and listened to each interview audio file several times and used memoing to reflect upon and organize my thoughts.

Data sources for triangulation included the district *Strategic School Profile* that can be accessed via the Connecticut State Department of Education's website, school-wide behavior data, staff assignments/resource allocation, and interviews of teachers and administrators. These artifacts provided information on frameworks and performance related to school and district-wide responses to and support for student behavior. Data sources were analyzed and compared and contrasted with interview data to further aid in the understanding of school context, systems, practices and priorities specifically pertaining to student discipline practices, school-wide behavior initiatives and coordinated responses to behavior issues.

Approval was granted from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), as well as the central administration from the selected school district.

Data Analysis

After reading and reviewing the data in its entirety, I sorted common themes and derived meaningful codes (Creswell, 2007). Visual representations that cited findings across participants were created for analysis. Codes emerged through the data analysis process which produced overriding themes (Creswell 2009, pp. 196, 241; Seidman 2006, p. 125) pertaining to the main categories of data: teachers' perceptions of student behavior, strategies employed to increase self-efficacy and/or reduce feelings of burnout, and self-efficacy that teachers experience in their daily teaching lives in response to student behavior.

As recommended by Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014), I condensed my qualitative data to make it stronger. According to Miles et. al. (2014), data condensation refers to “the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and/or transforming the data that appear in the full corpus (body) of written up field notes, interview transcripts, documents, and other empirical materials” (2014, p. 12). I used matrices to assist me with analyzing and displaying my data. I created a matrix comparing teachers’ feelings of self-efficacy with their feelings of burnout and their perceptions of student behavior. This assisted with understanding, promoted further analysis, and helped with identifying themes and patterns. Using matrices also helped with making contrasts, and comparisons, and helped to further organize my data, which in turn assisted with drawing and verifying conclusions from within my study (Miles et. al., 2014).

Trustworthiness and Limitations

Several steps were considered to ensure data trustworthiness. Trustworthiness was attained through a study design in which I replicated the procedure for each case (Yin, 2003). Further, I selected multiple case studies for inclusion in my qualitative case study. I analyzed a few key themes in each case for the purposes of understanding the complexity of my case study (Creswell, 2007). I created descriptions of each case study including themes within each case, followed by thematic analyses across cases (Creswell, 2007). I also interpreted the meanings of the cases (Creswell, 2007). I used self-reflection notes as a means to describe how my interpretation of the data may be shaped by my background (Creswell 2014, p. 202). In addition, adhering to the same interview protocols and procedures established consistency and dependability.

My methods were not without limitations. Teachers from one rural district in one small state, Connecticut, voluntarily participated in the study. Deciding the “boundaries” of my case -

its constraints in terms of time, events, and processes - was challenging (Creswell 2007, p. 76). I also needed to set boundaries that adequately surrounded my case including clean beginning and ending points (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, some caution is advised when generalizing the results. Additionally, I used an interview technique to gain insight and information from teachers regarding their perceptions of student behaviors, their responses to student behavior and their feelings of self-efficacy and burnout related to student behavior. Had I observed teachers in their classrooms as well, I may have gained additional insight and information into these issues. Finally, my position as a superintendent and special services director in a neighboring school district may serve as a limitation because, although I do not directly oversee the teacher respondents, there is interconnectedness between leadership, staff, students and families in such small, rural communities.

Findings

Regardless of their number of years in the profession, grade level taught, or school where they teach, the teacher respondents described, across the board, that many of the behavioral strategies they use are ineffective, fail to extinguish student misbehavior, and may even unintentionally escalate it over time. This was evidenced by student behavior and discipline data as well as teacher reports of students continued and repetitive demonstrations of disruptive, defiant/non-compliant and off-task behaviors regardless of strategies used and perhaps because of certain strategies used. Teachers explained they are willing to try anything to enhance student behavior. For example, they disclosed consulting with colleagues during team meetings, attempting strategies introduced via professional development and webinars, such as Polly Bath's "turn and talk," implementing strategies outlined in individual behavior support plans, and researching best practices regarding behavioral strategies.

Regarding consequences for student behavior, all of the teachers reported using verbal redirections, warnings and reminders. They all referenced revised seating arrangements and exclusionary time out strategies such as student removal from class. In addition, they all discussed non-exclusionary time-out strategies, such as planned ignoring and removal of reinforcing objects or activities, such as reduced recess time or denial of access to student rewards and incentives. All of the teachers discussed parent and administrative contact as a consequence for student behaviors, sometimes coupled with a restorative consequence, such as an apology note, but more often combined with a discipline referral that follows progressive discipline guidelines. All of the teachers emphasized the importance of reinforcing clear and explicit rules, routine and consistency.

It is important to note that a substantial repertoire of strategies was described by teachers as being used regularly to address student behavior; however, these same strategies were often described as ineffective over time. This may indicate either an indiscriminate or ineffective use of strategies, which points to a lack of understanding regarding the underlying rationale as to why, or in which manner, one behavioral strategy should be used over another. It appears teachers randomly choose strategies to address student behavior, either from force of habit or as a result of their belief system. As a result, it is difficult for them to determine why one strategy may be more effective over another for a particular student and/or situation or why a chosen strategy may work one day but not another.

Although teachers were dismayed the strategies they used regularly were ineffective over time, this did not seem to negatively influence their ratings of self-efficacy. Findings, therefore, indicate that teachers' self-efficacy was not necessarily linked to the effective use of behavioral strategies and decreased feelings of burnout. Instead, teacher respondents mostly attributed their

lack of success to external forces (e.g., decreased funding and support, poor parenting and trauma). Thus, their feelings of self-efficacy seemed linked primarily to the number of strategies with which they have become familiar (the strategies themselves and not how effectively they are used). In fact, all of the teachers rated themselves between eight and ten in effectiveness when managing student behavior, with the exception of a third-grade teacher with twenty years of experience who rated herself as a six.

Teachers' reported feelings of self-efficacy

A second-grade teacher who taught in her own classroom for four years, but who was also previously a permanent substitute teacher for seven years, rated herself as a nine in effectiveness when managing student behavior. She indicated that “for the most part, I feel that I deal with behaviors pretty well.” She also stated that she will “try anything” and that at one point in her first year of teaching in her own classroom, she questioned herself and thought that maybe she “wasn’t meant to have a classroom” because she “didn’t know what to do” with one particular student. She went on to describe that she eventually hit upon a strategy that worked with him and with another student who “constantly made noises.”

A first-grade teacher who taught for thirteen years and rated herself as an eight in effectiveness when managing student behavior explained that “a lot of times I will get the difficult kids” because I have “good management,” but she could also not explain why this was the case. In speaking about her effectiveness, she said “it (just) depends on the day.” This comment was common among teacher respondents and reinforces the fact that, although teachers have many strategies to draw from, they felt they were neither able to replicate their successes, nor could they say with confidence why one strategy was more effective over another. These sentiments are in alignment with Lortie’s (1975) classic work on the lives of teachers in which he

concluded that, “Teachers perceive their psychic reward as scarce, erratic and unpredictable. They are vulnerable to the ebb and flow of pupil response; even highly experienced teachers talk about ‘bad years,’” (p. 211). Thus, my findings which are explored in greater detail below, not only highlight the many strategies teachers used to address student behavior in their classrooms, but also their perceptions of student behavior, their reported feelings of self-efficacy in managing student behavior and its influence, and their feelings of burnout, if any.

Teachers’ perceptions of student behavior

Teachers overwhelmingly described feelings of burnout. These included common perceptions such as irritation, frustration, anxiety and exhaustion. Novice and veteran teachers alike perceived an increasing number of students demonstrating maladaptive behavior including disrespect and refusals to comply at younger and younger ages (preschool and kindergarten children were repeatedly mentioned as examples of this). They also argued that because certain preferred responses to student behavior, such as ultimatums and exclusionary practices are discouraged, students were “getting away with” significant behavior. Teachers were concerned some students were becoming increasingly disrespectful, defiant and dangerous and that they saw increased refusals to comply with demands, and unsafe behavior.

Students were described as witnessing classmates who were “out of control,” and using extreme profane language, like a kindergartener calling her teacher “the C word” in class. A mid-career first-grade teacher described some behavior as, “you can hear kids screaming, running down the halls...or throwing things across the room, getting upset and taking book bins and chucking them at the kids. Just running all over the classroom...” Teachers explained needing to have students removed from classrooms because they become so disruptive to the learning environment, such as throwing desks, toppling bookshelves, and hitting peers and staff. A

veteran kindergarten teacher stated “kids are not born to behave this way; something has happened to them to make them behave this way.”

Teachers perceived some students as willfully disregarding classroom rules and expectations. A beginning third-grade teacher stated, “You give them an inch and they take a mile.” Another teacher stated, “Some students don’t really care about learning anything,” and several others made statements such as, “They should know better,” and “Why can’t they just do what they’re supposed to do?” The teacher respondents expressed that home issues and other extenuating circumstances contribute significantly to school behaviors. They reported increasingly negative occurrences having to do with students’ home lives resulting in trauma that impacted some students’ ability to learn and maintain appropriate behavior in the school setting.

Teachers felt the trauma affecting some students outside of school significantly limits their ability to improve student outcomes within the school setting. They reported they often discuss these impacting factors with their colleagues as a growing problem they are ill-equipped to resolve. Their comments indicated a belief that certain students are incapable of maintaining appropriate behavior in the classroom as a result of their life circumstances, no matter the behavioral strategies used and no matter which teacher is using them. An experienced first-grade teacher noted “the parenting styles are different for many of our kids.” She went on to explain that she has a six-year-old daughter and she doesn’t “allow nonsense at home.” She has a good time with her child and she is “a really good kid because we’ve set boundaries. We’ve set routines. We’ve set these things.” She explained that, to the contrary, some of her students are permitted to play adult video games and watch adult television programs and movies.

Many other teachers expressed similar frustrations regarding a lack of perceived parental accountability. For example, a first-grade teacher felt that “kids basically have all the rights and

we're just kind of catering to everything.” The teachers’ comments suggested they felt they do everything they can with certain students, but there is only so much they can do. A kindergarten teacher said her students “need more than what (she) can give them.” These statements reinforce a deficit perspective and reflect teachers’ beliefs that parents and discipline structures are to blame for student disruptive behavior.

Teachers’ perceptions of disruptive behavior. When presented with two separate disruptive behavior scenarios: one in which a student makes loud, off-topic comments during whole group instruction; and another in which, during instruction, two students are talking to one another about an incident that occurred on the bus that morning, teachers’ feelings ranged anywhere from sadness to surprise to anger to irritation to concern. Some responses were the following:

- I’m sad (what more can I do?);
- I’m wondering (depends on child and situation);
- I need to growl (grr);
- I’m pretty upset (frustrated)
- I’m worried (about what may have happened on the bus)

This highlighted the varied ways in which teachers perceived student behavior and the context within which the behavior may occur. It appeared that at times, the teachers were relatively unconcerned regarding the particular context, or setting event, which may have caused the behavior to occur. They seemed more focused on the behavior itself and its disruption to their instruction. A veteran third grade teacher explained that she is “at the point where I’m kind of done with her because I feel bad for the other kids,” when describing one student’s on-going behavior. The same teacher discussed her frustration with students who simply don’t like to complete academic tasks, such as writing. On the other hand, at times, the teacher respondents also seemed interested, conceptually, in getting to the root cause of the student problem. They

wondered whether or not the student needs attention, if the student is feeling hungry or frustrated or if something is going on at home. This indicates that teachers' perceptions of student behavior may influence their management strategies and, perhaps, their feelings of self-efficacy and burnout.

Teachers' perceptions of defiant/non-compliant behavior. Teachers expressed a similar array of emotions when presented with two separate defiant/non-compliant behavior scenarios: one in which a student throws his book on the floor and bumps into two peers as he runs across the room to his desk after he was asked by the teacher to return his book to his book bin; and another in which a student continues playing with blocks when asked to clean them up. Teacher emotions ranged anywhere from sadness to anger to agitation to concern. The teachers stated that these behaviors could make them: upset; agitated; frustrated; angry; mad; or concerned. A kindergarten teacher described that she would "remain calm" and a third-grade teacher explained that she "understands" such behaviors. The array and continuum of teachers' emotions in response to two defiant/non-compliant behavior scenarios may indicate that teacher responses to student behavior are extremely personal and emotional. It does not appear the teachers are making self-efficacy connections in their daily practice related to the functions of student behavior and how to more successfully support their behavior. This may again affirm Lortie's (1975) findings that teachers are vulnerable to the ebb and flow of their work days and their appraisals of situations are subjective. Further, it reveals a teacher's perception of student behavior and their ability to manage it may influence feelings of self-efficacy and burnout.

Teachers' perceptions of off-task behavior. Finally, when presented with two separate off-task behavior scenarios: one in which a teacher unsuccessfully attempts to redirect a student during independent work time; and one in which a teacher attempts to redirect a student to her

seat to complete work during center time, teachers expressed feelings of anticipation (what's going to happen next?); frustration (with themselves and with the student); upset; sadness or disappointment (why?); exasperation (are you kidding me?); annoyance and bafflement as to why some students seemingly refuse to be redirected. Again, the extreme variability in teachers' emotional responses to student behavior does not suggest self-reflective insight into their daily practice related to student behavior and how to more successfully support their behavior.

Strategies teachers use to respond to student behavior

The behavioral strategies teachers discussed can be classified into distinct categories: positive behavioral supports; restorative (relationship building); environmental (thoughtful planning of daily setting); and consultative (suggestions from colleagues and specialists). Teachers discussed using positive behavioral supports, which center on routine and regular positive reinforcement, along with recognizing, rewarding and reinforcing expected behavior so as to extinguish undesired behavior and replace it with more desired behavior, as well as planned ignoring of undesired behavior. They also discussed using social emotional strategies, such as relationship building and establishing rapport with students to improve students' behavior. Environmental strategies were discussed as well, such as preferential seating, close proximity, predictable routines and structure. Overall, teachers were well versed in describing strategies they are familiar with via their professional development opportunities and district-wide initiatives. Collegial support was also discussed as was redirection (both verbal and non-verbal). Teachers stated that they often do not use office referrals as a behavior management tool because they would be "writing (some students) up every day."

Positive behavioral supports. In an effort to define and maintain clear and consistent classroom behavioral expectations, teachers said they regularly (daily) implemented positive tier

one support strategies in their classrooms. These included recognizing positive behavior and framing behavioral redirections positively. Specific ways in which teachers used positive reinforcement and framed things positively included verbal praise and recognition. Teachers said they praise behavior they want to see repeated. Teachers also said they use rewards and incentives with students. Specific rewards and incentives mentioned included: star tickets, brag tags, star students, selecting from a prize box and special privileges, including: lunch with the teacher, extra recess time, preferred seating in class, special classroom activities, and positive phone calls home.

A veteran kindergarten teacher who reported using techniques focused on positive behavior stated:

...who wants to hear don't do this, don't do that, you can't do that, stop doing that, why are you?...I would rather be told...'You need to sit in your seat...' Instead of, 'Don't do this, don't do that...I would much rather use positive words than negative words.

The same teacher recalled herself encouraging a student, saying to him, "'You can do this. I know you can....Today, you and I, we're going to work really hard and we're going to get to that gold.' And we did because I knew he needed it, but it was hard." Similarly, a beginning second-grade teacher explained that, "...for the most part, I really do focus more on positive in my classroom...they get really excited when they're on STAR student. ...it makes me happy when I see them happy, so I really do think they need that..." This seems to indicate a belief in the rationale behind the positive support system the district has adopted.

A classroom strategy that all teachers talked about is the use of a clip chart. The use of a clip chart is intended to recognize positive behavior in the classroom by allowing students to "clip up" when they have demonstrated a positive behavior, and also to provide explicit

behavioral redirection whereby a student will be asked to “clip down” when they have displayed a behavior that requires remediation. The clip chart should provide a visual cue to students regarding their behavioral performance, as well as provide a reminder to the teacher to get into the habit of noticing and recognizing appropriate classroom behaviors. The individual teachers’ feelings towards clip charts varied among respondents, as did their usage of the strategy. One teacher did not report using a clip chart at all and another teacher said she would not know what to do without one. This second-grade teacher explained “my biggest backbone of my classroom management is my clip chart. I use that for everything.” The remaining teachers fell somewhere in the middle with their usage of the clip chart system. This shows teachers have differing opinions regarding the methodology of using clip charts as a behavior management strategy.

All of the teachers stated they used some form of classroom rewards system. A veteran third-grade teacher talked about her brag tag incentives:

So, when I see a student doing something good, they get a brag tag, whether it’s for work, or behavior, or anything. It’s just a little piece of paper that I printed, and you can buy them online or make your own. But then I give them out...I gave all my kids a book, and every time they get a brag tag, they can glue it into their book. And, at the end of the month, they get prizes. I do three tiers of prizes... a couple of (students get to have) lunch with the teacher, or something amazing...

All of the teachers noted using “STAR” tickets as a way to recognize positive behaviors, having common school-wide behavioral expectations, and teaching and re-teaching the expectations and holding students accountable to the expectations. A mid-career first-grade teacher commented:

One thing I really like...is the whole school is on the same page, so all the kids follow the same expectations. I have no fear of talking to another teacher's students because we all do it. I see a kid, I don't know the kid, but I, 'What do we do in the hallway? What's our voice scale?' We all use the same language.

Some teachers also noted that they create classroom expectations together with students, which are then posted in the classroom and reviewed regularly. A beginning third-grade teacher recalled:

Sometimes kids, they just need to be told what your expectations are and we try to make the expectations together at the beginning of the year...we talk about it and then we come up with ideas together that we think, how it would help us be successful together, and we also have the school expectations that everybody's expected to follow, so we are constantly reinforcing that.

Planned ignoring, a strategy designed so that the teacher will ignore minor undesired behavior rather than reinforce it with attention, was discussed by every teacher as a behavioral management strategy; however, teachers disclosed using this strategy so as to avoid a potential power struggle with some students. At times, teachers preferred to ignore disruptive behavior as long as everyone is safe and a potential conflict can be avoided. They disclosed using this strategy mainly due to fatigue, anxiety and lack of additional adult support in the classroom.

Social emotional strategies. Teachers also discussed the importance of relationship building and making connections with their students. A first year third grade teacher commented:

You can't be serious all the time, and the kids know, and I'll just look at them and I'll laugh...so they know that you're human. You're not a robot. You have to show emotion.

I've cried in front of them over a book or whatever. They have to know that you're human. They have to know that you have a soft side. You're not just some militant. A veteran kindergarten teacher said, "I like to have fun with them (my students)." She stressed that "you have to find some humor, some laughter in something." She also described, "I like them to know that I'm human, too...I'm just like them. I'm not any different." Additionally, she emphasized the importance of teamwork. She referred to the class as a "team...so we need to work together...we take care of our classroom together."

Relationship building and making connections with students were high on the list of all of the teachers when they discussed their behavioral strategies. They felt it is important for them to have fun with their students and to have a sense of humor. Although many of the respondents realized their students can tell when they are upset or frustrated, they emphasized the importance of trying to keep their attitudes happy and upbeat while they are with their students. All discussed check-in/check-out (positive behavior support) plans with students as important for relationship building, but also said they should not have a role in helping to implement these plans as that should be the sole responsibility (creation and implementation) of behavioral support providers.

All of the teachers emphasized the importance of enumerating choices for students as an effective behavior management tool. They felt doing so helps students have a voice, thereby promoting and fostering mutual respect and trust. A second-grade teacher in particular embraced this behavioral strategy. She said giving kids lots of choices really helps with minimizing behavior in the classroom by avoiding power struggles. These included choices regarding order of assessment completion, seating in the classroom, books to read, and assignments to complete. Many teachers further explained that when giving students choices they phrase the choices in

terms of *if...then* statements. A beginning third-grade teacher said, “It’s a give and take. If you want to do this, then we have to be able to get to that.” She described this as a “dangling carrot” and “sometimes with some kids the carrot’s bigger than others.” Many *if...then* scenarios described by teachers included a loss of privilege, a phone call to the principal and/or a phone call home if the student did not comply with the choice. In sum, teachers used choice with students as a classroom management strategy, but sometimes it appeared to be a choice between a mandatory activity and a consequence for the student.

Environmental strategies. Environmental strategies all teachers reported using included preferential and flexible seating arrangements. For example, a first year third-grade teacher stated that she “bought yoga balls... to help them redirect their energy (and uses) flexible seating or private reading spots or writing spots...” Separate seating arrangements were also discussed. A veteran third-grade teacher said that, if students continue to talk in class, she might “put them somewhere where there was nobody else around. You know, I have some corners of the room...where there (is) nobody for them to talk to.” Teachers talked about individual and small group instruction; posting schedules; structure; predictable routines; consistency and organization. A veteran kindergarten teacher explained how she has a schedule and she “pretty much sticks to that schedule all day, every day, unless something happens within the school...and I have to tweak the day a little bit. And then, it’s called a topsy-turvy day, and then they know what’s coming...” Planned breaks and movement breaks were also discussed. A second-grade teacher described, “Now that this is my fourth year, I’ve learned that I have to give them movement breaks. If I give them movement breaks, if I take away that five minutes (from instruction), then I can accomplish so much more than if I just try to work through it and stop constantly...” The environmental strategies teachers described span a continuum of beliefs from

intolerance of minor disruptions resulting in exclusionary practices to an understanding that students require frequent structured breaks to remain successful and productive throughout their school day.

Support from colleagues. In general, teachers expressed a reluctance to call for support from colleagues on issues of student behavior. They gave differing reasons for this. Some teachers expressed confidence in their abilities to manage student behavior without outside support. Others felt when they have called for support it was not reliable (it either came too late or not at all), and still others felt they didn't want to be perceived as failures. A relatively new fourth grade teacher disclosed, "You kind of feel when you call for support you're doing something wrong and you don't want people to think, 'Oh, she can't handle this classroom'... You try to do anything to keep that going smoothly." When teachers did call for support, they generally did so to have a student removed from the classroom. They either used special education, behavioral support staff, or administrative assistance to help with student removal. Calling for support may result in an office behavior referral, which is handled administratively. The reluctance of teachers to call for support may indicate a breakdown of camaraderie and/or a flaw in the overall climate and culture of the school settings, which inhibits adults from supporting each other without fear of reprisal or retribution. A general lack of trust between colleagues may also have inadvertently shaped teachers' responses to student behavior.

Teachers' feelings of self-efficacy in their ability to manage student behavior and its influence on their feelings of burnout

On the surface, there did not appear to be a relationship between participants' feelings of self-efficacy when managing student behavior and feelings of burnout. With the exception of one teacher who rated herself as a six in both effectiveness and confidence, respondents rated

themselves between eight and ten in effectiveness and confidence in behavior management (ten being the most effective). This may be because, for a variety of reasons, the teacher respondents felt it important to project high levels of self-efficacy despite their admissions that their strategies were ineffective with some students, and despite expressing feelings of burnout (i.e., frustration, defeat, failure, negativity, sadness, worry, irritation, disbelief, exhaustion and stress) to the point where several respondents disclosed questioning whether they were in the right profession and that maybe, they were not “cut out for this.” For example, a beginning third-grade teacher described her viewpoint:

If the kids come in the door right from the beginning of the year...and they meet me and I'm confident and I have my stuff together and they can tell by my body language, the smile on my face or whatever, they'd know they're going to be okay...so you have to be self-assured, you have to be confident. Whether or not you really are, that's the game face you need to put on.

A relatively new fourth grade teacher described her viewpoint: “You definitely see more of a respect when an administrator knows that you can handle behaviors...” A mid-career first-grade teacher described a similar viewpoint: “I feel like there are a lot of people that put on these brave faces, but when you talk to them privately we're all dying inside, that's how we talk about it...” Together these comments indicate teachers may be managing student behavior on a superficial level to impress an administrator, project confidence, or simply make it through the day.

Overwhelmingly, teachers' comments suggested, despite their classroom management strategies and stated self-efficacy in this area, that when students continued to demonstrate disruptive, defiant/non-compliant and off-task behaviors, it was due to conditions outside of the teacher's control. An experienced first-grade teacher stated:

...we're all just doing our best and do a pretty darn good job I think, considering what we are entrusted with and supports we're given...we are doing the best we can with what we have, but a lot of times this is just a band-aid...We're really trying...Every teacher in this building is amazing and they give their hundred percent while they're here, and we feel like we try everything, but we can't do it all.

Perhaps, as a result of a deficit perspective, there was no meaningful difference noted in teachers' self-reporting of efficacy based on years of experience, grade level, or school. For example, a veteran third-grade teacher said, "When a student is defiant or angry, it doesn't make a difference who is talking to them, it's just the way the student is." The same teacher said, "My classroom management has definitely gotten stronger, but there's certain situations I just don't know." Such comments reveal a lack of understanding as to the effective usage of behavioral strategies as they relate to specific student behavior.

Teachers explained dealing with students who refuse to do anything is exhausting and frustrating because they don't know what to do and despite facing the same behavior day after day. Teachers attributed repetitive and regular student misbehavior, not only to family trauma and lowered economic circumstances, but also to budgetary cuts. A veteran third-grade teacher stated, "It's been problematic over the past few years, but they just keep cutting back and cutting back and cutting back." This teacher also explained that "we used to have a clinical day treatment program...it was nice...but...we don't have that program anymore." Every teacher talked about decreased paraeducator and behavior support services combined with increased class sizes and more observed student behaviors. Teachers lamented a lack of energy and attributed it to having to go through the same cycle with "the behavior kids" year after year. They discussed feeling drained because the "same scenarios happen over and over again" and

they feel that they are not “getting anywhere.” Teachers described exhaustion, manifesting itself in a decreased desire to stay after school to complete work, and/or to complete work at home. The perception that teaching has become increasingly difficult given the decreased level of support and the increased level of behaviors, has contributed to these teachers feeling especially vulnerable to symptoms of burnout.

The teacher respondents expressed feelings of increased challenges and expectations coupled with decreased supports, which have contributed to their feelings of burnout. They repeatedly expressed “I can’t” feelings when discussing the amount and level of repetitive student disruptive, aggressive and assaultive behaviors and the lack of support they receive at the classroom, school, and district levels. Teachers revealed that the increase of extreme student behavior has caused them to feel unsafe and to experience feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, contributors to feelings of burnout. For example, when working with some of her students, one teacher commented she feels like she is just “spinning (her) wheels and not getting anywhere.” Another teacher commented she feels she is “butting (her) head against the wall and not making any progress” and still another stated, “I’m done. I have no more ideas,” and “I’m just trying to function at this time.” The teacher respondents expressed student behavior was beyond their control, like “a roller coaster that never ends.” Moreover, teachers said they felt it was their job to protect students and staff and are feeling, through no fault of their own, less and less confident that they have the resources and decision-making ability to achieve this goal.

Teachers emphasized they have felt both physically and mentally ill, both extreme symptoms of burnout, due to stressors at work. They explained these feelings are not a result of their inability to manage typical student behavior effectively, but as a result of more frequent and intense student behaviors, along with reduced support and autonomy in the classroom as well as

increased demands and accountability associated with the profession. A first-grade teacher said: “We are feeling like we are starting to have mental health issues because we don’t have the skills and support to deal with this.” She further stated, “...I feel like we are dealing with needs that should be met with...mental health experts. We’re not these people, but we’re expected to deal with these emotional issues that we don’t know about.” Several teachers expressed the job negatively impacted their physical and/or mental well-being. For example, a veteran third-grade teacher disclosed that her physician recommended she take a school year off for medical/mental health reasons, which resulted in her being prescribed medication to “get through the school year.” Related, an experienced first grade teacher reported that one of her colleagues broke out in hives due to work-related stress. She also commented that teachers “joke that we have PTSD,” and that one student’s extreme behavior during the previous school year caused her to:

feel like I was physically, mentally scarred by the amount of chaos and the amount of craziness and the amount of behaviors, so you can’t ever heal from it. It truly feels like you have been traumatized in a way because you go in every day hoping or you go in like, ‘It’s going to be a good day today, it’s going to be good,’ and you start with a smile on your face and then...

Teachers made statements such as: “This is killing me,” “I thought at one time that this was going to kill me,” “It’s like hours of my life that I’m not going to get back,” and “I wonder if I’m going to give myself a heart attack.” It was evident teachers felt they were in a battle with student behavior and that this battle negatively influences the teachers’ health and well-being.

In addition, teachers said their worry and apprehension followed them home at night, impacting their home lives. They indicated difficulty sleeping at one time or another, as well as crying, and perseveration. It was mentioned that it is difficult to “let it go,” and that “you replay

everything constantly.” Several respondents disclosed family members were concerned enough about their well-being to recommend they quit their jobs due to stress. A veteran third grade teacher explained that sometimes when she goes home, she cannot be with her kids and be nice to them if something stressful happens at school. The teachers generally felt teaching is not the kind of job where you can just forget everything when you go home.

Discussion

As stated at the outset of this research study, teacher attrition (and migration) is a significant problem in our schools. According to Johnson and Birkeland (2003), the overall teacher shortage is exacerbated by teachers moving from school to school and/or district to district. They further explain that workplace conditions are “pivotal” in teachers’ satisfaction with teaching and their ultimate career choices (Johnson & Birkeland). Lortie (1975) describes the central importance of the nature of rewards teachers get from their work, which derive from “psychic” satisfaction as opposed to financial rewards (Hargreaves, 2010). Teachers’ decisions to stay at their school, transfer to a new school, or leave teaching altogether depends, more than anything else, on whether they feel they are effective with their students (Johnson & Birkeland). These findings, coupled with research linking burnout to teachers’ perceptions of student behavior and their perceived abilities to successfully manage their behavior, support a positive connection between teachers’ feelings of self-efficacy and their feelings of burnout.

Teachers report they find teaching personally rewarding, but poor working conditions, particularly in low-income schools, undermine their satisfaction and retention (Simon & Johnson, 2015). This research study highlights the challenges that teachers in “forgotten” rural communities experience. As Tieken (2014), a scholar of rural schools, laments regarding the reasoning behind her work, “I hated the rural invisibility - the neglect by policy makers that left

racial and geographic inequalities unacknowledged and unchecked,” (p. 6). In this study, teachers felt like they were not being heard, that their concerns were unimportant and inconsequential, that policies were not written with them and their students in mind. They felt too that they were being overlooked for scarce resources. In this overall climate, though problematic, teachers’ tendency to rely on a deficit perspective and its emphasis on the failings of the system, the support, the families, the communities and the students rather than examine their own lack of self-efficacy in their day to day practice when managing student behavior may be understandable.

This study indicates that, although student behavior is a source of teacher burnout, it is not the leading source (McCann & Johannessen, 2004; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003; Swartz, 2018). Rather, a combination of factors contributed to these teachers’ feelings of chronic work stress, including a reduction in supports and resources, an overall increase in student need and trauma, and increased expectations and accountability. Perhaps as a coping mechanism, teachers have become accustomed to explaining their lack of success with students in deficit terms. This may best be explained within the context of “The Paradox of Poverty Narratives” (Gerstl-Pepin, 2006), which takes into account school inequities within a context of social inequities in its examination of how poverty complicates teaching. In a district that is coming to terms with an approximately 30% increase in its poverty levels over the past few years as evidenced by free and reduced lunch counts. According to Gerstl-Pepin (2006), there are “very real contextual disparities in which different teachers find themselves” (p. 144).

Class inequalities are embedded in the norms of our schools (Gerstl-Pepin, 2006). This assertion was reinforced in this study with the candor in which the teacher respondents either revealed that, because of what they hold to be true regarding public schools, they send their own

child(ren) to private school(s), or they discussed their confusion and frustration regarding their students' family situations. They expressed extreme disappointment as to why some of their students simply cannot follow the school rules. They related their experiences as teachers, to when they were students with respect to the fact that they, themselves, would never dream of misbehaving or transgressing the school rules in the manner in which some of their students do. This indicates, perhaps without realizing it, the teacher respondents framed their perceptions through a biased lens.

Gerstl-Pepin (2006) further asserts that, although NCLB suggests student success should not be determined by a student's economic circumstances, it misses the deeper social justice challenges that children and parents from impoverished backgrounds and their teachers face every day. Low-income children are exposed to greater levels of violence, disruption, improper healthcare and supports, and trauma than their middle-income counterparts (Gerstl-Pepin). The findings of this research study support these assertions in that each teacher respondent emphasized the challenges that children and families experience outside of the school setting, which make their work as teachers increasingly difficult. Poverty complicates teaching (Gerstl-Pepin), and so one may reasonably conclude that, to a certain extent, structural prejudice and bias has influenced teachers' perceptions and responses to students and their behaviors.

Significance and Implications

This study demonstrated that teachers are experiencing symptoms of burnout as a result of their perception regarding the amount and level of repetitive student disruptive, aggressive and assaultive behaviors coupled with what they perceive as a lack of support at the classroom, school, and district levels regarding student behavior. This study uses qualitative data from a rural district to draw attention to the extreme pressures teachers feel in their everyday practice as

they grapple with what they perceive as increased and more aggressive student behaviors and decreased supports and resources to manage them effectively. In addition, teachers outlined what they perceive as a steady decline of resources and supports. Supports once available to them, such as an alternative setting within the schools, behavior specialist support, and para-educator support either no longer exists or was substantially diminished due to budget cuts. Teachers further stated that while behavior plans are created for students, it is difficult, if not impossible, to implement them with fidelity due to inadequate resources and supports. Teachers feel like they are under siege daily, which causes them to demonstrate severe signs of burnout. This may, in the long run, be a significant factor contributing to teacher attrition and premature retirement.

This study also demonstrated that teachers may not have accurately reported their feelings of self-efficacy when managing student behaviors. It was contradictory for teachers to self-report efficacy when managing student behavior and simultaneously report the increase and escalation of that same behavior resulting in their feelings of pervasive and/or increased feelings of frustration, helplessness and hopelessness. Upon further analysis, it seems teachers couched their self-efficacy perceptions in a deficit orientation whereupon some students were viewed as unable to be successful. In this way, teachers were able to justify and rationalize their lack of positive results with some students by placing the onus of failure squarely on the circumstances of the students based upon inferences pertaining to their economic background and community.

The results of this study should encourage improved teacher education and professional development specifically targeted to the issues surrounding student behavior management and social emotional learning. For example, districts should strategically use their behavioral data to assess and analyze behavioral and social emotional trends in schools, which could then serve to inform professional development opportunities and initiatives. Targeted professional

development opportunities and initiatives informed by best practices, data, and behavioral trends would help to reduce teacher burnout, especially based on teacher feedback indicating that district professional development and initiatives to date have been ineffective or, at the very least, fall significantly short of their current needs in the classroom setting.

State policy makers should use the findings of this research study to revisit the regulations for teacher credentialing. There should be a mandated behavioral and social emotional learning endorsement attached to credentialing requirements, which could include coursework on effective behavioral responses to student behavior based on its function, as well as coursework in restorative and trauma informed practices, and social emotional learning. In this way, teachers would feel equipped with effective tools, strategies and behavioral pedagogical practices prior to entering the classroom, thereby reducing feelings of ineffectiveness, anxiety, failure and eventually, burnout.

Similarly, administrators in higher education should use the findings of this study to amend teacher preparation programs to include coursework on behavior management, targeted strategies and social emotional learning to increase the consistent application of effective teacher responses to significantly diminish maladaptive student behavior in the school setting. District level administrators should use the results of this research study to ensure that building level administrators monitor and assess student behavior issues and patterns in classrooms and schools with regular and repetitive behavior issues. They should also ensure adequate funds, resources and supports are provided to effectively address what teachers perceive as an increasing frequency and intensity of student behavior at younger and younger ages, causing teachers to exhibit significant symptoms of burnout, including physiological symptoms.

Building level administrators should use the findings of this study as a reminder of the

influence of behavior issues on teachers. They should reflect on the findings of this study to determine what they can do differently in response to student behavior and to effectively support teachers. For instance, they could monitor and assess student behavior issues and patterns in classrooms with behavior issues. By doing this, they could track and support behavior at the classroom and school levels thereby increasing consistently effective responses to student behavior based upon its function. This would also help to reduce teachers' feelings of burnout, thereby reducing teacher attrition. Additionally, school leaders should ensure appropriate and adequate resources and that supports and efforts are targeted to support classroom and school/district-wide behavior and social emotional issues.

Much of the current literature regarding teachers' perceptions and/or explanations of the challenges they face when dealing with student behavior relies on quantitative techniques. These techniques include the use of surveys and ratings scales that examine teachers' self-efficacy as it relates to classroom management and burnout, but there is less qualitative research on this issue. Research experts have recommended that qualitative measures can significantly add to the breadth of a study in this research area (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Côté & Morgan, 2002; Yamasaki, et al., 2006). Using qualitative methods enhanced the body of literature since one-time quantitative measures may not provide a full picture of what is assessed. This is critical because teachers' actions and behaviors when managing student behavior may be heavily influenced by their perceptions and/or explanations (Cothran et al., 2009; Tsouloupas et al., 2010), which can only be given adequate attention and analysis through qualitative measures.

In the future, researchers should consider a larger scale study regarding this issue. For instance, they could conduct a study across States that includes more teachers, differences in configurations of districts and schools and tease out, more specifically, issues related to teacher

perceptions of student behavior, behavior management strategies used, and their influence on feelings of self-efficacy. Future research might also take into consideration the costs associated with this growing problem. Fiscal costs associated with this problem include educating, hiring, training and developing new teachers only to have them leave the field, as well as having students expelled from classrooms and being referred to special education. Human costs associated with this problem include teachers who are exhibiting extreme symptoms of burnout. Additionally, future research might also consider a more in-depth investigation of the strategies that some teachers use effectively to enhance feelings of self-efficacy, which positively influence burnout and teachers' perceptions of student behavior. This is especially important because the results of this study do not indicate that teachers understand why one strategy may be more effective over another strategy in any given circumstance. Teachers' general lack of understanding regarding effective responses to student behavior and use of one strategy over another suggests these problems will continue in our schools unless, and until, a greater understanding is achieved regarding underlying functions of student behavior.

Appendix A

Teacher Interview Protocol #1

The following semi-structured interview protocol includes interview questions aimed at gaining information about the participants, such as their backgrounds, approaches to student behavior, school and classroom behavior systems, and the context of the school/district

Introduction

To facilitate my note-taking, I would like to audio tape our conversation today. I have a release form that I will ask you to please sign. As the sole researcher on the project, only I will have access to the audio tape, which will be destroyed after transcription. In addition, I will ask that you sign a form drafted to meet the human subject requirements. Essentially, this document states that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) I do not intend to inflict any harm. Thank you for agreeing to participate. (Stanford University- Sample Interview Protocol)

Our interview today will last approximately thirty to forty minutes. My research focuses on student behavior and classroom management, its influence on feelings of burnout, and strategies that you may use in the classroom to respond to student behaviors. My goal is to simply understand your day to day dealings with classroom management, student behaviors, and strategies you may use.

- 1) Tell me about your experience teaching in this school?
 - a) How did you come to teach at this school?
 - b) What was your previous professional or teaching experience?
 - c) How many years have you been teaching? In your current position?
 - d) Have you taught in other schools? If so, explain (give details of previous teaching experiences)
- 2) Could you tell me about your school's behavior management system?
 - a) What do you perceive as its strengths? Weaknesses?
 - b) What is your evidence of this?
- 3) Could you also tell me about your classroom management system?
 - a) From your point of view, what's working? What are some areas for improvement?

- b) What is your evidence of this?
- 4) Please share a few strategies that you use for behavior management.
 - a) From your point of view, what's working? What are some areas for improvement?
 - b) What is your evidence of this?
- 5) What are some supports/resources allocated towards behavior management system(s)?
(*in the classroom or schoolwide*)
- 6) Who supports you with student behavior management in your classroom? In the school?
 - a) Does your principal or assistant principal provide support?
 - b) Does anyone from the district deliver support?
 - c) Does anyone else?
- 7) What kinds of professional development opportunities are available for you to increase your strategies to respond to student behaviors?
 - a) Tell me about a recent PD.
 - b) What was useful?
 - c) What else would you want to learn in future PDs on this issue?
- 8) (Teacher perceptions of particular student behaviors). Researcher has several behavior scenarios written on cards for participants to review. Researcher shows pictures of emojis demonstrating a continuum of emotions to participant and asks participants to select an emoji that demonstrates their perception of the scenario. The researcher then asks the participant to describe their perception and also asks the respondent how they might respond to such a scenario.
- 9) Can you share your beliefs about the most appropriate ways to manage student behavior?
 - a) What is your evidence of this?
 - b) To what extent do your beliefs help or hinder you in any way when managing student behaviors?
 - c) Can you give an example?
- 10) Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you very much for talking with me. Your responses are greatly appreciated. I learned a lot from our conversation.

Appendix B

Teacher Interview Protocol #2

The following semi-structured interview protocol includes open-ended interview questions aimed at generating a discussion in relation to teachers' self-efficacy relative to managing student behaviors, their perceptions of student behaviors, feelings of burnout and strategies used to increase self-efficacy and/or reduce burnout.

Introduction

To facilitate my note-taking, I would like to audio tape our conversation today. I have a release form that I will ask you to please sign. As the sole researcher on the project, only I will have access to the audio tape, which will be destroyed after transcription. In addition, I will ask that you sign a form drafted to meet the human subject requirements. Essentially, this document states that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) I do not intend to inflict any harm. Thank you for agreeing to participate. (Stanford University- Sample Interview Protocol)

Our interview today will last approximately an hour. My research focuses on student behavior and classroom management, its influence on feelings of burnout, and strategies that you may use in the classroom to respond to student behaviors. My goal is to simply understand your day to day dealings with classroom management, student behaviors, and strategies you may use.

Exploring Self-Efficacy in Handling Student Behavior

- 1) In your teaching, how important is classroom management?
 - a) Why is that the case?
- 2) You shared some behavior management strategies with me last time we talked. Can you give additional examples of strategies that you use to manage student behaviors?
 - a) How do you typically handle students' behaviors?
 - b) Which strategies have been effective?
 - c) Which strategies have been less effective?
- 3) How did you develop/learn about strategies to handle student behaviors? (Probing to get information about):
 - a) Teacher preparation experience in terms of acquiring the skills to manage student behaviors
 - b) Receiving assistance or discussing the issue with colleagues or

principal/administration

Learning about behavior management in teacher prep program

- 4) Researcher shows a picture of an emoji demonstrating an emotion and asks participant: Tell me about a time when a student behavior made you feel like this. How often do you feel like this? Researcher repeats this activity with a continuum of emotions emojis.
- 5) On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being the least effective and 10 being the most effective, how effective do you feel when managing student behavior?
 - a) How important is it for you to experience success when managing student behaviors?
 - b) How important is it for you to feel confident when managing student behaviors?

Challenges with student behaviors

- 6) Please reflect on the past few days in your classroom...Could you describe your students' behaviors in the classroom?
 - a) What are some of your central challenges with student behaviors?
 - b) What are some issues that you've faced with managing students' behaviors?
 - i) Could you share with me some examples or stories of such incidents?
 - c) What types of feelings/emotions do you have about your students' behavior?

Exploring feelings of burnout influenced by student behaviors

- 7) Burnout can be described as a process by which teachers' efforts, energy, persistence, and coping mechanisms are overpowered by recurring and unfavorable work-related stressors. Please share a time when this matches how you've felt about teaching.
 - a) To what extent do you experience these feelings of burnout?
 - i) How?
 - ii) Can you give an example?
 - b) What do you believe has contributed to these feelings of burnout?
 - i) How?
 - ii) Can you give an example?
 - c) To what degree does student behavior influence these feelings of burnout?
 - i) How?
 - ii) Can you give an example?
- 8) The last time we talked, we explored examples of student behaviors and your perceptions of those behaviors. How do your perceptions of student behaviors shape your feelings of burnout/not burnt out?

- a) How do student behaviors influence your classroom instruction?
- b) How do these behaviors influence your interactions with parents? Colleagues? Administrators?

Closing comments/reflection in relation to dealing with student behaviors

- 9) In your opinion, what could researchers, administrators or other stakeholders do to help you feel more successful when handling student behaviors?
- 10) Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you very much for talking with me. Your responses are greatly appreciated. I learned a lot from our conversation.

Appendix C

Building Administrator Interview Protocol

The following semi-structured interview protocol includes interview questions aimed at gaining information about the participants, such as their backgrounds, approaches to student behavior, school and classroom behavior systems, and the context of the school/district

Introduction

To facilitate my note-taking, I would like to audio tape our conversation today. I have a release form that I will ask you to please sign. As the sole researcher on the project, only I will have access to the audio tape, which will be destroyed after transcription. In addition, I will ask that you sign a form drafted to meet the human subject requirements. Essentially, this document states that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) I do not intend to inflict any harm. Thank you for agreeing to participate. (Stanford University- Sample Interview Protocol)

Our interview today will last approximately thirty to forty minutes. My research focuses on student behavior and classroom management, its influence on feelings of burnout, and strategies that you may use in the classroom to respond to student behaviors. My goal is to simply understand your day to day dealings with classroom management, student behaviors, and strategies you may use.

- 1) Tell me about your academic and professional experiences.
 - a) What certifications do you hold?
 - b) What is your current administrative assignment?
 - c) How many years have you been an administrator? At your current assignment?

- d) Have you been an administrator in other schools? If so, explain (give details of previous administrative experiences).
- 2) Can you tell me a bit about this school?
 - a) What is your school's current enrollment?
 - b) What is the average number of students in classes?
 - c) What would you consider the level of student need in this school? Can you explain?
- 3) Please share a few examples of school/district policies that address student behaviors/
- 4) How would you describe your school/district wide behavior management system?
- 5) How are supports/resources allocated to support your behavior management system?
- 6) What does your school-wide behavior data indicate about student behaviors?
- 7) How do you support student behavior management at the classroom level? At the school/district level?
- 8) What are the professional development opportunities available for faculty and staff to increase their strategies to respond to student behaviors?
 - a) Tell me about a recent PD
 - b) What was useful?
 - c) What else would you like to see in future PDs on this issue?
- 9) From your perspective, how effective are your teachers at managing student behaviors?
- 10) Can you give examples of strategies that your teachers use to manage student behaviors?
- 11) To what degree do you believe that teacher burnout is an issue amongst your staff?

12) In your opinion, what could researchers, fellow administrators or other stakeholders do to help you feel more successful when handling student behaviors?

13) Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you very much for talking with me. Your responses are greatly appreciated. I learned a lot from our conversation.

Appendix D

Disruptive Behavior	
<i>Scenario 1</i>	During whole group instruction, a student makes loud, off-topic comments in order to make peers laugh. The teacher provides multiple redirections during the class period, however the student continues to make loud, off-topic comments to gain peer attention.
<i>Scenario 2</i>	During instruction, 2 students are talking to one another about something that happened on the bus that morning. The teacher stops teaching, and privately reminds the students that the expectation is to be quiet. The 2 students continue talking loudly, and other students seated nearby are distracted by the conversation. The teacher separates the two students. After being separated, the 2 students begin talking with peers nearby.
Defiant/Non-Compliant Behavior	
<i>Scenario 1</i>	At the end of “choice time”, students are asked to clean up their area and join the teacher on the carpet. One student, continues playing with blocks in the corner of the room. The teacher approaches the student and asks her to clean up the blocks, and the student ignores this request and continues playing.
<i>Scenario 2</i>	At the end of reading, the teacher asks students to return their books to their book bins and to return to their seats. One student throws his book on the floor and runs across the room to his desk, bumping into 2 peers as he runs. The teacher asks the student to pick up the book, put it away, and walk back to his desk. The student says, “No! You can’t make me!”
Off-Task Behavior	
<i>Scenario 1</i>	During independent work, a student sits at his desk with his head down. After multiple attempts to redirect the student to the task, the student says, “This is stupid”, throws the worksheet on the floor, and puts his head back down on the desk.
<i>Scenario 2</i>	During center time, a student gets out of her seat and walks across the room to talk to a friend. The teacher notices this, and asks her to return to her assigned area. A few minutes later, the student is back out of her seat, wandering around the room. The teacher has to leave her small group in order to provide a reminder to the student to continue working. When the

	student returns to her table, she stares out the window and does not complete the assigned task.
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Appendix E



Appendix F

Research Questions	Findings	Implications
RQ1: What are teachers' perceptions of student behaviors?	<p><i>Teachers perceive that:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some students are becoming increasingly disrespectful, defiant and dangerous; they willfully disregard classroom rules and expectations. Students are demonstrating maladaptive behaviors at younger and younger ages. Students have been allowed to "get away" with behaviors both at home and at school; they blame themselves to a certain extent for allowing students to "get away" with behavior at school. Home issues and other extenuating circumstances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student behaviors are becoming more common and severe. This is vital information for educators and researchers to develop strategies or training programs that can benefit school systems in their overall responses to this growing problem Issues outside of school contribute significantly to school behaviors. This is vital information for policy makers to consider when enacting legislation

	<p>contribute significantly to school behaviors. Certain students are not capable of maintaining appropriate behaviors in the classroom because of their life circumstances, no matter what behavioral strategies are used and no matter what teacher is using them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are witnessing classmates who are “out of control.” • We are dealing with needs that should be met with medical professionals, not educators 	<p>that supports students and families as many behaviors that are being demonstrated by students at school are a consequence of adverse experiences that occur outside of school</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student behavior issues and patterns should be monitored and assessed regularly by school administration through data collection and observation
RQ2: How and why do teachers respond to student behaviors?	<p><i>Positive Interventions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • routine and regular positive reinforcement • recognizing, rewarding and reinforcing expected behaviors • planfully ignoring undesired behaviors. <p><i>Restorative:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship building and establishing rapport with students. • Having fun with students • Keeping things happy • Relating to students on a more personal level. <p><i>Environmental:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preferential seating • Close proximity • Predictable routines • Structure. <p><i>Consultative:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consulting and collaborating with colleagues • Relying upon colleagues to assist with the discipline and removal of students from their classrooms. • Some teachers expressed reluctance to ask for support from colleagues <p><i>Additional Strategies:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redirection (verbal & non-verbal) • Office Discipline Referral 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional education should be provided that gives teachers the <i>rationale</i> behind what strategies they should use for which types of behaviors • Adequate opportunities to master the skills necessary to successfully manage student behaviors should be provided to teachers • Teacher preparation program coursework should include classes on behavior management and <i>targeted</i> strategies to increase the consistent application of effective teacher responses to student behaviors based on their functions • Administrators should ensure adequate resources and support are provided in classrooms to assist teachers with the management of student behaviors • Increased proactive and systematic support should be provided to teachers from administrators and colleagues
RQ3: How and why do teachers’ perceptions of behaviors and their responses to them influence their efficacy and feelings of burnout?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No meaningful difference was noted in teachers’ self reporting of efficacy based on years of experience, grade level, or school. • Despite teachers’ described self-efficacy in this area, students continue to demonstrate disruptive, defiant/non-compliant and off-task behaviors. • Teachers’ confidence in managing student behaviors improves the longer they teach; however, their longevity in the classroom also has the tendency to increase their feelings of burnout due to the repetitive nature and severity of student behaviors, decreased supports and assistance to respond effectively to the behaviors, and lack of control and autonomy when managing the behaviors. • A changing culture regarding recommended responses to student behaviors, coupled with perceived flaws with their district PBIS framework, teachers are feeling increasingly disempowered when managing student behaviors. • The increase of extreme student behaviors is contributing to feelings of burnout. • Teachers have felt both physically and mentally ill (both extreme symptoms of burnout) due to stressors at work. These feelings are a result of more frequent and intense behaviors, coupled with reduced support and autonomy in the classroom as well as increased demands and accountability associated with the profession. • Conditions exist that are outside of teachers’ control and unrelated to their self-efficacy, that cause students to regularly demonstrate disruptive, defiant/non-compliant and off-task behaviors, which directly contributes to teachers’ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers should be provided supports that specifically aim to improve their stress management skills • Resources should be allocated to assist teachers with self-care and wellness • Administrators should encourage teachers to feel empowered and take ownership in their management of student behaviors • Policy makers should address the issue of increased and more severe maladaptive student behaviors on a broader level outside of the school setting • Increased resources and supports should be made available to families and children in economically depressed, rural areas • Administrators should ensure that PBIS fits into a broader framework of social emotional learning and restorative practices

	feelings of burnout.	
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Figure 1. Research findings and implications

Appendix G

<i>School A</i>	<i>Perceptions of Student Behaviors</i>	<i>Strategies Used</i>	<i>Feelings of Burnout</i>
Teacher 1 Grade K 17 Yrs. Of Experience Self-Efficacy Rating: 7.5-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students should understand the expectations Sometimes they just don't care Kids aren't born to misbehave Nothing surprises me 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ignore Verbal redirect Verbal warning Visual reinforcement Clip Chart Frequent reminders Call for help Teach and reteach the expectations Consequence Verbal praise Positive attention/notes Office referral Humor/laughter Creating classroom expectations PBIS Schedule Routine Consistency Teamwork 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annoyed Drained Irritated Upset Angry I don't have time I'm by myself No support/short staffed Sadness Concerned Frustration Inadequacy (kids need more than I can give) Stress Helpless (I want to do more) Budget constraints Time constraints
Teacher 2 Grade 2 4 Yrs. Of Experience Self-Efficacy Rating: 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some behaviors are beyond students' control Some students are very disrespectful There's not really much that can surprise me Behaviors are getting younger and younger Kids can't handle losing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Office referral Clip Chart Star Student Tickets Review behavior expectations Call for support Verbal praise/reinforcement Verbal redirection Verbal warning PBIS Relationship building Student choice Student removal from class Note to parent/guardian Loss of privileges CICO Preferential seating Apology note Consequences Routine Compliment jar/incentives Movement breaks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of staff and support Inadequacy (sometimes I don't know what to do) Anxiety (what's going to happen next)? Angry/Upset Tired Stress Frustration Sadness Pressure Excessive paperwork Excessive responsibility Discouraged Roller Coaster feeling Put on a brave face Budget constraints
Teacher 3 Grade 3 30 Yrs. Of Experience Self-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Behaviors are getting younger and younger Students refuse to work A lot of student behavior has to do with them watching violent video games and watching violent movies Students don't care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Call for assistance Star Student Prize Box/Incentives Structure/Schedule Phone calls/Notes home Peer groupings Preferential seating If...then statements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frustrated Mad Agitated Not happy Fear Having to stay calm Being responsible for students' safety

Efficacy Rating: 8		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency meetings • School pledge • Planned ignoring • Remove student from class • Verbal/non-verbal redirection • Consequences • Relationship building • Clear rules and expectations 	
<i>School B</i>	<i>Perceptions of Student Behaviors</i>	<i>Strategies Used</i>	<i>Feelings of Burnout</i>
Teacher 4 Grade 1 13 Yrs. Of Experience Self-Efficacy Rating: 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kids are allowed to terrorize other kids • Children are being exposed to things that they shouldn't be, based on the behaviors of their peers • No strategies will help when you have a child who is emotionally disturbed • We are dealing with needs that should be met with medical professionals, not educators • Until these children are given what they need and not just a band-aid, nothing will get better. • You can't make somebody stop talking. • Usually kids don't act like this unless they are frustrated • If you get into a power struggle, they will push back • Kids need someone who will be tough with them • So many kids are disrespectful and yell and don't listen to anything anybody says. • There's nothing you can do to stop kids from doing whatever they want to because they're allowed to get away with it at home • The behaviors that we're encountering are so severe that it takes away from everything we're trying to do. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call the office • Relationship building • Bucket tickets/Incentives • Verbal praise/reinforcement • Clip chart • If...then statements • Loss of privilege • Morning circle • Routine • Structure and expectations • CICO • Boundaries/clear expectations • Create expectations together • Review expectations • Joke, laugh, have fun • Planned ignoring • Eye contact • Physical prompt • Verbal prompt • Verbal warning • Verbal reminder • Verbal praise • Follow behavior plan • Bribery • Assist the student with task • Office referral • Parent contact • Talk privately • Check for understanding • Drawing attention to students doing the right things 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mad • Sad • This is going to kill me • Frustrated • Angry • Physically, mentally scarred • Traumatized • It's getting harder because it's a culmination of years. • (We joke that we have) PTSD • I can't do this anymore • Overwhelmed • Just trying to function • (We feel we are) starting to have mental health issues because we don't have the skills or support to deal with this • Physically ill • Crying every night • Stress • Feeling like a failure • Feeling "fried." • Feeling alone and helpless • Is this how I want to spend the rest of my life? • It's impossible and you're expected to do it and keep your cool and teach all these other kids at the same time. • Teachers are physically ill, breaking out in hives because they are so stressed out. • (We're all) dying inside
Teacher 5 Grade 3 20 Yrs. Of Experience Self-Efficacy Rating: 5-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disbelief/Surprise/Shock • This class in general has a lot of tough kids in it • The behaviors are more defiant • It's just sad that certain students don't want to do anything • They have such a hard time at home that they just don't really care about learning anything. • Why can't kids just do what they're supposed to do? • If everyone just came in and sat down and did their work and didn't talk, it would be wonderful, but that's not what kids do. • The kids don't care • If a student is defiant or angry, it doesn't make a difference who is talking to them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clip chart • Choices • Consequences • Brag tags/Incentives • CICO • Recognize good behaviors • Alternate seating • Call the office • Planned ignoring • Give good attention • Office Referral • Parent phone call, note, email • Speak to student privately • Loss of privilege • If...then statements • Review expectations • Relationship building • Check for understanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frustrated • Angry/upset • Sad • Disappointed • Exhausted • Stressed • I feel burnt out quite a lot • If something stressful has happened in the school, it carries over to home/can't let it go • It's not the kind of job where you can just forget everything. • Everything is so hard. • I don't think we have as much support as we did have. There's not always somebody that can come and help. That can be really hard if you're dealing with that kind of stuff all the time, then it definitely can be stressful.

Teacher 6 Grade 3 1 Yr. Of Experience Self-Efficacy Rating: 8-9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I wish I had a crystal ball to see inside their heads I feel disrespected (by the students) I understand (certain behaviors) I'm worried (about other behaviors) I want to know why (the student is feeling this way) Baffled They're bored They're trying to avoid something Overall, these behaviors are typical in my classroom. It's just the kids, who they are. Sometimes they can't control their behaviors They're kids and they come with a lot of baggage You give them an inch and they take a mile It's beyond my control at a certain point 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create classroom expectations together Incentives Routines/Consistency Reteach routines and expectations CICO Planned Ignore Classroom jobs Sensory diet (gum, yoga balls) flexible/preferential seating regularly change seating and position in lines Restate directions Redirect Verbal warning Read body language Talk to students/build rapport Humor show emotion Be honest Non-verbal cues If...then statements Consequences Loss of privilege Keep it happy and light Self-assurance/confidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stressed If you're always feeling like you're butting your head against the wall and not making any progress, then I could see where it would lead to frustration and burnout where you're just spinning your wheels and not getting anywhere. Whether you're not getting support from the staff or the admin or the parent. If you don't have all those pieces fitting together, then you're constantly in the corner bouncing off the wall and not getting anywhere.
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Figure 2. Research questions categorized by respondent

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